

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In a microwave cooking device, including a container for holding a food product and a seal for sealing said container to enclose a substantially fixed volume therein, the improvement comprising:

at least one venting configuration, including (a) at least one steam guide defining a central vent in the seal with a tip ending before an outer edge of the seal, the central vent weakening a portion of the seal adjacent the tip of said at least one steam guide and being in fluid communication with the volume enclosed within said container to allow movement of steam from said container into said at least one steam guide, and (b) a pair of steam horns associated with and positioned on either side of said at least one steam guide, the steam horns defining side vents in the seal and ending before the outer edge of the seal, the side vents further weakening the portion of the seal adjacent the tip of said at least one steam guide and being in fluid communication with the volume enclosed within said container to allow movement of steam from said container into the steam horns, such that, when said container is heated, steam and pressure are preferentially directed towards the tip of said at least one steam guide, causing pressure to be concentrated at the weakened portion of the seal, resulting in the seal being preferentially broken adjacent the tip of said at least one steam guide.

2. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 1, wherein the seal is created between two portions of said container.

3. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 2, wherein said container is a substantially flexible cooking bag.

4. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 1, and further comprising a covering, wherein the seal is created between said container and said covering.

5. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 4, wherein said covering is selected from the group consisting of: a film, a snap-on lid, and a vacuum-sealed covering.

6. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 1, wherein said steam horns are angled toward the tip of said at least one steam guide.

7. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 1, wherein the volume of said at least one steam guide is increased by forming an indentation along an upper surface of said container.

8. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 7, and further comprising a steam guide channel disposed below and in fluid communication with said at least one steam guide.

9. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 7, wherein the volumes of said pair of steam horns are also increased by forming indentations along the upper surface of said container.

10. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 9, and further comprising a steam horn channel disposed below and in fluid communication with each of said pair of steam horns.

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11. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 9, wherein said indentations along the upper surface of said container serving as a drinking port for consuming a prepared food product.

10 12. The microwave cooking device as recited in claim 1, wherein said container includes at least two compartments for holding food product, each compartment being sealed to enclose a substantially fixed volume therein and equipped with said at least one venting configuration.

15 13. A method for packaging food, comprising the steps of:
providing a container for holding a food product;
placing one or more food products in said container;
sealing said container with a seal to enclose a substantially fixed volume therein;
and

20 providing said container with at least one venting configuration, having:
at least one steam guide defining a central vent in the seal with a tip
ending before an outer edge of the seal, the central vent weakening a portion of the seal adjacent
the tip of said at least one steam guide and being in fluid communication with the volume

enclosed within said container to allow movement of steam from said container into said at least one steam guide; and

5 a pair of steam horns associated with and positioned on either side of said at least one steam guide, the steam horns defining side vents in the seal and ending before the outer edge of the seal, the side vents further weakening the portion of the seal adjacent the tip of said at least one steam guide and being in fluid communication with the volume enclosed within said container to allow movement of steam from said container into the steam horns, such that, when said container is heated, steam and pressure are preferentially directed towards the tip of said at least one steam guide, causing pressure to be concentrated at the weakened portion of the
10 seal, resulting in the seal being preferentially broken adjacent the tip of said at least one steam guide.

14. The method for packaging food as recited in claim 13, wherein said steam horns are angled toward the tip of said at least one steam guide.

15 15. The method for packaging food as recited in claim 13, wherein the volume of said at least one steam guide is increased by forming an indentation along an upper surface of said container.

20 16. The method for packaging food as recited in claim 15, wherein the volumes of said pair of steam horns are increased by forming indentations along the upper surface of said container.

17. The method for packaging food as recited in claim 13, wherein said container includes at least two compartments for holding food product, each compartment being sealed to enclose a substantially fixed volume therein and equipped with said at least one venting configuration.